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SOLEMN REASONS
FOR
DECLINING TO ADOPT
THE
BAPTIST THEORY & PRACTICE:
IN A
SERIES OF LETTERS
TO A
BAPTIST MINISTER.

BY NOAH WORCESTER, A. M.

Pastor of a Church in Thornton.

Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.

Solomon.

Nor he that commendeth himself is approved; but whom the Lord commendeth.

Sr. Paul.

And he spake this parable unto *certain*, who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.

St. Luke.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IT is very well known, that the denomination called Baptists, have claimed for themselves the honor of being the visible church of Christ, to the exclusion of all others ; and that they have manifested a disposition to attribute it to criminal blindness, and selfish motives, that all who enjoy the light of the gospel do not embrace their distinguishing sentiments. This being the case, it doubtless behoves every one, who is capable of it, seriously to inquire, Why he is not a Baptist ? And if, on inquiry, any one finds that he has other reasons than those alledged against him, he has doubtless a right to exhibit them, in his own vindication, and for the consideration of others.

The writer of the following Letters has availed himself of this right ; and he hopes that what he has written may be of use both to Baptists and Pedobaptists.

In writing the following Letters, the name Baptist has been generally used in preference to Anti-Pedobaptist ; not as being more correct and distinguishing, but because that is the name by which the denomination generally distinguish themselves, and by which they are more universally known.

Letters to a Baptist Minister.



LETTER I.

REV. SIR,

IN the discourse I lately had with you, some things were suggested, which have led me to serious inquiry. I cannot doubt that some persons have viewed me as inclined to the Baptist sentiments, excepting the sentiment of close communion. Such apprehensions probably arose from the following things ;—the readiness which I have discovered in receiving Baptists into the church of which I have had the care ; the affectionate freedom with which I have conversed with such Baptists as I esteemed real christians ; my exchanging with some preachers of that denomination ; and my attempts to open the way for free communion between Baptists and Pedobaptists.

Nor can I say that I never had any doubts in my mind as to the truth of the Pedobaptist theory. In my younger years, I had some struggle in my mind. This I think was occasioned, in a great degree, by the overwhelming confidence with which the Baptist preachers and writers affirmed their sentiments. But in riper years, I became convinced that great confidence in asserting an opinion is no evidence of the rectitude of the sentiment, nor of the goodness nor prudence of him who makes use of this art to gain proselytes.

The struggle in my mind, however, had probably a salutary effect, in softening my feelings towards the Baptists ; and in leading me to judge favorably of some who embraced their sentiments.

But, dear Sir, I think you were the first person who ever intimated to me a reason why I did not go over to the Baptist ground ; at least the first, who suggested the same reason, viz. “ That I feared to appear in opposition to GREAT NAMES.”

This suggestion I think has been of some use to me; but on the most careful examination I cannot find that what you suggested is *the* reason, nor any reason why I have not become a Baptist.

But I am free, Sir, to confess to you, that there are things which I *do fear* when I contemplate the idea of embracing the Baptist theory and practice, according to the prevailing fashion of the present day. And, wishing that my freedom may give you no offence, I shall take the liberty to state to you, in some following letters, the grounds of my fears. It is indeed a delicate task which I have proposed for myself; and it requires, perhaps, more candor, wisdom, and prudence, than I possess, to execute it in a suitable manner. But I hope, Sir, that I shall not, in any instance, lose sight of my accountability to him who searcheth the heart. — According to my views of duty, I shall use *plainness of speech*; but I mean to avoid *railing accusation*. Some things which I view as of a reprehensible nature, that have appeared in *many* of your denomination, I shall have occasion to notice; but I hope to notice them in such a manner that I shall have no occasion to tremble at the thought of meeting a Baptist at the bar of God. And I hope, Sir, that you will read with a disposition to disapprove of evil, whether it be found in yourself, or in any of the brethren of your denomination.

Your's, &c.

LETTER II.

REV. SIR,

ACCORDING to promise I proceed to observe,

1. I *fear* to take ground on which I must meet with serious questions, arguments, and objections, which I cannot answer otherwise than by disgusting quibbles, cants, or jeers, or insulting exclamations.

Serious questions, arguments and objections, I foresee that I must meet, if I become a Baptist. With respect to many of which, I can foresee no way to answer or obviate them by fair reasoning. And from the

free use which is made of quibbles, jeers and exclamations, by some writers and speakers on your side of the question, I suspect that *they* discover, in many instances, no *rational* mode of defence. I think that no man of sense, and due consideration, would make use of the weapons I have named, in such a serious cause, but from dire necessity. To think of being reduced to such necessity, fills my mind with dread. I therefore fear to become a Baptist.

I will not, Sir, pretend that there are *no* instances in which Pedobaptist writers and speakers have been guilty of using such weapons as those to which I have objected; but this, Sir, I think I *ought* to say, that the use of such things is beneath the dignity of a Christian Minister, inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel, and disgusting to persons of a humble and judicious mind,
Your's, &c.

LETTER III.

REV. SIR,

ONE ground of fear has already been stated: I will now observe,

2. That I *fear* to take ground on which I must make use of *dogmatical assertion* instead of *argument*, or urge arguments which I know are fallacious and inconclusive.

I am sensible that, with many people, confident assertions have more weight than conclusive arguments; and this circumstance appears to be perfectly understood, and greatly relied on, by too many Baptist writers and speakers. But I have, Sir, either a *natural* or *habitual* aversion to such a method of proving a point. And to make use of arguments which I know are fallacious and inconclusive, seems to me to border hard on *dishonesty*.

If I should become a Baptist, I know not of but two sources of argument, of which I could make use, to disprove the propriety of infant baptism. And my conscience tells me, that arguments from either of those sources must be fallacious and inconclusive.

What is called the *want of explicit warrant*, is one of the grounds I must take. By explicit warrant is meant a plain or express precept, or an unquestionable example. But how could I honestly reason from this ground against infant baptism, while I know that a point may be as clearly and fully proved by *fair deductions and inferences*, from *Scripture premises*; as by what is called *explicit warrant*?

Besides, if I deny infant baptism for the *want of explicit warrant*, I must also, to be consistent with myself, deny the right of female communion at the Lord's table; the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week; the propriety of administering the Lord's supper in a public manner before the world; the propriety of *audible* and *public prayer*, before and after sermon, or before and after baptism. I must also deny the right of any ordinary Pastor or Elder of a particular church to administer the ordinance of baptism; and the propriety of *continuing* water baptism in the church since the days of the Apostles.—Moreover, I must deny the right of any particular person, whether Baptist or Pedobaptist, to officiate as a Gospel Minister.

Female communion, and the change of Sabbath, have often, and justly, been urged as standing on the same ground, as to the *mode of proof*, with infant baptism. Now, Sir, I will seriously ask you, whether all the other things, which have been enumerated, do not also, as to the *mode of proof*, stand on the same ground? Where will you find express precept, or unquestionable example, for administering the Lord's supper in a *public manner*; or for the practice of *public* and *audible* prayer before and after sermon, or before and after baptism? Not in the Bible, it may be presumed.—Where will you find your explicit warrant for a Pastor of a particular church to administer the ordinance of baptism? And where is your explicit warrant for the *continuance* of water baptism in the church? The whole support of water baptism in the church at the present day, results precisely from the same mode of reasoning which we adopt in favor of infant baptism,

viz. inferences from Scripture premises, and the testimonies contained in ecclesiastical history.

We come now to the last particular. Permit me, Sir, seriously to request of you to produce *explicit warrant*, from the Scriptures, for *your officiating* as a *gospel minister*. Is your name explicitly written, or your character unquestionably described in the Bible as an authorized minister of Christ? Or have you even *fully* and *unquestionably* the qualifications which are *explicitly* required of a Bishop, Elder, or Pastor?

Suppose a man should doubt the propriety of *hearing* you *preach*, and should demand of you a *Thus saith the Lord*, authorizing *you* to preach the gospel; what method would you adopt to satisfy his mind? To be consistent with yourself, in denying infant baptism, would you not be obliged to acknowledge that you have *no warrant* to preach the gospel?

Now, Sir, is it not extraordinary that Ministers of your denomination should so *confidently deny, reject*, and even *ridicule* infant baptism, while every thing you do, as Baptist Ministers, is *wholly unauthorized* by any such warrant as you demand, in support of infant baptism? And while you cannot support *one article* of your own practice, in respect to positive institutions, by any other mode of reasoning than that which you *ridicule*, when adopted in favor of baptizing the infant seed of believers? Is it not, Sir, still *more* extraordinary that, while the whole of your own practice rests on this mode of reasoning, you should feel yourselves authorized to connect with "*Antichrist*" the whole Pedobaptist church in all ages?

Your's, &c.

LETTER IV.

REV. SIR,

IN my last I mentioned the first source of argument against infant baptism; and endeavored to show its fallacy and inconclusiveness. For a second source of argument I should have to bring into view several passages of Scripture, from which it appears

that *believers* were *baptized*, and that of *adults*, a *profession of faith* was required as a *prerequisite* to baptism ; and from such premises I should have to infer that infants were *not* baptized. But must I not act a *dishonest* part to draw such a conclusion when my conscience assures me that no such thing is implied in the premises ? To argue simply from such passages of Scripture, I might as well infer that, in the Apostle's days, believers *had no children*, as to infer that their *children were not baptized*. For neither the one nor the other is implied in the premises.

I will now state a case which may illustrate the fallacy of both the arguments against infant baptism. Suppose I had imbibed a prejudice against the practice of having *little children attend public worship*. I advance the sentiment that no children under twelve years of age should appear in the house of God, excepting when brought in infancy to be presented to the Lord.*

In support of my opinion I deny that there is any *Thus saith the Lord*, or explicit warrant for the practice in the gospel state of the church. That there is no express precept nor unquestionable example. And, hence, the practice must be unlawful under the gospel dispensation.

For further proof I introduce the second source of argument, and exhibit those passages of Scripture which plainly show that *adult* persons were required to attend, and the examples of their attendance : And hence infer that *children did not attend* in the Apostles' days ;—that it was not the design of Christ that they should attend, and that the practice of their attendance in the present age is supported only by tradition, and is *unauthorized, unlawful and wicked*. Would not

* When Jesus was *twelve years old*, he went with his parents to Jerusalem, to attend the passover, *after the custom of the feast*. These words, *after the custom of the feast*, have probably reference to the age at which children first accompanied their parents to the feast of the passover. This may appear by reading two verses in connection :

“ Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.

“ And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem, *after the custom of the feast*.”

Upon the last verse, Mr. Pool's Continuator makes this observation : “ It is said by those learned in the Jewish writings, that till a child was of that age, he was not obliged, by the law, to go,” that is to the passover.

many children *under* twelve years of age be able to see the *weakness* and *fallacy* of such reasoning? How, then, does it come to pass that men of the first abilities among the Baptists, will urge such arguments as conclusive against infant baptism?*

Should I become a Baptist, while I should have nothing to urge against infant baptism but such *weak* and *inconclusive* arguments, in opposition to these I should have to meet a connected chain of conclusive reasonings, which I foresee no possible way to break or to invalidate.

From the sacred Scriptures it would be clearly proved, that in the gracious covenant which God made with Abraham, and under which the church was formed in his family, and by which he was constituted the father of all that believe, the all-sufficient God engaged to be a God to him and to his seed:

That as a “*seal* of the righteousness of faith,” and a “*token* of the covenant,” circumcision was instituted:

That as the promise was to him and his seed, so both he and his seed were commanded to be circumcised:

That the blessing of Abraham has come on the Gentiles—that believing Gentiles are heirs of the promise,

* You will be pleased, Sir, to observe, that *public worship*, as really as *baptism*, is a *divine* and *positive institution*; and the danger of deviating from the divine warrant, is as great in the former case as in the latter. And now, Sir, I wish to address some serious questions, not to the *passions* of the *multitude*, but to your *own conscience*. On the supposition that a person had adopted this sentiment, *that we have no warrant from Scripture for a child to attend public worship between one and twelve years of age*; might he not adopt the whole course of your *reasoning*, *declamation* and *ridicule*, against infant baptism, and apply it in support of his new theory? The two arguments have already been considered. Might he not, also, urge the example of the blessed Jesus, and dwell upon this topic in a very moving manner? Might he not go into the same course of *vehement*, *frighful*, and *censorious* declamation, which you adopt; and with equal propriety apply your *favorite texts* to frighten parents from the practice of taking their children with them to the house of public worship? Such as the following: “Teaching them to *observe all thing; whatsoever I have commanded you*” “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.” “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” “In vain do ye worship me, teaching for doctrines, the commandments of men.” “Who hath required this at your hands?” With as much propriety, Sir, as you apply the last words, might not such a teacher adopt the whole verse, with a little comment? “When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands to tread my courts,” with your *unqualified* children by your side? And if the practice of *ridiculing* infant baptism were not too *abominable* to be described, I might ask why the same might not be applied in the case before us, by asking us why we do not take our “*lambs and calves and young cattle*” to the house of God, as *proper subjects* of the ordinance of public worship?

even as Isaac was—that the covenant of the gospel church is the same that was made with Abraham, and the promise to believers the same, *I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee.*—That baptism signifies the same thing which circumcision did, viz. the renovation of the heart, and is the substituted *token* of the same covenant. Accordingly, as Abraham and his household were circumcised, so the Apostles baptized believers and their households.

In support of these ideas, the history of the church would afford evidence that infant baptism was handed down from the Apostles, and that it has been *generally* and uninterruptedly practised in the church, from the days of the Apostles to the present time. From such premises, rational conclusions may be drawn in favor of infant baptism, as practised at the present day. I know, however, that such conclusions may be *denied*, and even *ridiculed*; but, in my opinion, they never can be *refuted*.

With respect to the three households which were baptized by the Apostles, I am willing to admit that there is no positive evidence that in either of them there were little children. By persons of your denomination, this *want* of positive evidence, that there *were* children in those households, seems to be considered and treated, as amounting to positive evidence that there *were not*. But it ought to be understood, that there is no *positive* evidence that there *were* children in those households, nor that there *were not*. It is but supposition on the one side, and on the other. We may then candidly inquire which is the most *probable* supposition? According to what we know of households, it will not, I think, be thought extravagant, for a general and comparative estimate, to say, that there are *three* households which have in them little children, to *one* that has none. If, therefore, one household only had been mentioned, the supposition that there were little children in *that* household, would be *threefold* more probable than the supposition that there were not. But as *three* households are mentioned, and as three times three are nine, the probabilit-

ity is as *nine to one*, that, in one or other of those households, there were little children.

It may be proper to add, that whether there *were* or *were not* little children in those households, it is clear to my mind, from the representations in scripture, that a household was baptized upon the faith of one person.

Your's, &c.

LETTER V.

REV. SIR,

SOME may suppose, that I have already said more than was needful to shew the fallacy of your arguments against infant baptism; yet I have a desire to exhibit an examination of these arguments in another point of view.

You object to our practice of infant baptism, on this ground, *That we have no explicit warrant*. Whether your objection be proper, or not, depends entirely on the *correctness* or *incorrectness* of this principle, viz. That in respect to *positive institutions*, *explicit warrant is necessary to justify* our practice.

Now, Sir, let it be observed, that with respect to baptism, *we* voluntarily adopt one mode of practice, and you adopt another. In *our mode of practice*, we baptize the believer and his infant seed; in *your mode of practice*, you baptize the believer and exclude his infant seed. Each of the different modes of practice relates to a *positive institution*. Why, then, is not explicit warrant as necessary to justify *your* practice as *ours*? And have you, Sir, any explicit warrant for that part of your practice which EXCLUDES THE INFANT SEED? Does the *bare want* of explicit warrant for *our practice* amount to a *Thus saith the Lord* for *yours*? Or have you a whit of support for this part of your own practice but that of inferential proof?

Moreover, if explicit warrant be necessary to *justify* what we *do* respecting positive institutions, I think it should be considered as necessary to *justify* what we *say*. Will you then, Sir, be so kind as to produce

your *Thus saith the Lord* for saying that *explicit warrant is necessary* to justify all we do respecting positive institutions. Either I am under a mistake, or you have assumed, and taken for granted, the principle on which the whole weight of your argument rests. First *prove* that explicit warrant is necessary, and I will then yield to the force of your argument. But this, it may be presumed, you cannot do from the Bible, either by explicit testimony or fair deduction.

Something farther may yet be remarked, which, in my view, amounts to a great inconsistency on your part. For the support of infant baptism *we* depend on *implicit warrant* and *inferential proof*. This you reject, and demand a *Thus saith the Lord*, or *explicit warrant*. Yet, on your own part, you *depend* on precisely the same *mode of reasoning* as that to which you *object*.

In your second argument it is obvious, at first view, that you *depend* on the same mode of reasoning which we adopt. You state your *premises* from Scripture, and then draw your *inference* or *conclusion*. It is very true, that your *conclusion* is not implied in your *premises*; but still it is evident, that you depend on the same mode of reasoning which is adopted by us.

With regard to your *first* argument, it may not be so obvious to all, at first view, that in this you *depend* on *inferential proof*. I will therefore take the liberty to reduce the argument to a logical form. And if I mistake not, it will stand thus—Explicit warrant is necessary to *justify* the practice of infant baptism: but we have no explicit warrant for baptizing infants; therefore the practice of infant baptism cannot be *justified*.

What is this, Sir, but *attempting* to support *your* theory by inferential proof? And have you, Sir, obtained an *exclusive right* to this kind of proof, that you deny it to Pedobaptists?

I will now attempt clearly to state my views of the difference between your reasoning and ours on the subject of infant baptism.

On *our* part we state Scriptural premises, and our conclusions *naturally* result from our premises.

On your part, in your second argument you have fair Scriptural premises ; but still there is this defect, your *conclusion* is not implied in your *premises*. In your second argument, your *conclusion* fairly results from your *premises*, but there is this infelicity attending the argument, your *premises* are not to be found in the *Bible*.

Is it not, Sir, very remarkable, that while you would deny us the privilege of supporting infant baptism by *inferential proof* from *Scripture premises*, you should take the liberty to *assume a principle* for one of your *premises* which has no foundation in the Scriptures, and by the help of this *assumed principle* draw a *conclusion* against *infant baptism* ?

If, in the last paragraph, my meaning be not obvious, I will endeavour to make it so by requesting of you *Scriptural ground* for this principle, viz. *Explicit warrant* is necessary to *justify* the practice of infant baptism. Let this principle be fairly supported from Scripture, and the controversy on my part will cease for ever.

Such, Sir, being my views of the arguments *against* and *in favor* of infant baptism, can you wonder that I *fear* to change my ground ?

Your's, &c.

LETTER VI.

REV. SIR,

MY fear to take ground on which I must make use of fallacious and inconclusive arguments, operates against my becoming even an *open communion* Baptist. But when I contemplate the idea of becoming a *close communion* Baptist, my *fears* are greatly multiplied. Hence I may observe,

3. That I fear to take ground on which I must set at nought, as *heretical, unauthorized, and sacrilegious* proceedings, my own solemn ordination, and all my administrations of divine ordinances. And much more, if possible, do I fear to do the same by the ordinations and administrations of all the pious Pedobaptists Min-

isters of all ages. But all this I foresee I must do, if I should become a Baptist of the popular class. For what less than this could be implied in my re-ordination, and in my withdrawing from the fellowship of Pedobaptist churches?

4. I fear to take ground on which I must *say* and *do* things which will imply the idea that for many centuries Christ had no church in this world; or, in other words, that the adorable BRIDEGROOM was for many centuries without a *bride* on earth; unless I should admit the horrid supposition that, during that period, he accepted of an *Antichristian bride*.

According to Mr. Merrill, "not so much as a single branch of the church, in any place or age of the world, hath ever adhered to infant baptism;" and "infant baptism is peculiar to *Antichrist*."

And according to Dr. Gill, from the eleventh century back to the fourth, he was "not able to find *one instance* of an opposer of infant baptism."

It is clear, from Dr. Gill's testimony, that, though a Baptist himself he could find no evidence of a Baptist church during the space of seven hundred years. And if Mr. Merrill's testimony is worthy of credit, no other than a Baptist or Anti-Pedobaptist church is a church of Christ. According to him, the whole Pedobaptist church is "*Antichrist*." What then, Sir, is the conclusion which results from the testimony of your two brethren? Is it not plainly this, that so learned a man as Dr. Gill could find no evidence that Christ had a church on earth during a period of seven hundred years?

Many other witnesses might be produced, as credible as Dr. Gill, to extend the period of the non-existence of a church on earth to a much greater length of time, on the supposition that Mr. Merrill's testimony, which has been quoted, is to be received for truth.

I am willing Sir, to admit, that the ground Mr. Merrill has taken in calling the Pedobaptists "*Antichrist*," is perfectly consistent with the practice of close communion. But I fear, Sir, to take that ground; and in a future letter I shall tell you why.

Your's, &c.

LETTER VII.

REV. SIR,

ACCORDING to promise I must say,

5. I *solemnly fear* to become a public *reviler* of God's gracious covenant, his church, and people.

That gracious covenant which God made with Abraham; by which he was constituted *the Father of all them that believe*, does, in my view, contain all the provision which God has ever revealed for the salvation either of Jews or Gentiles. And for *me* to talk or to write respecting that covenant, as some of your denomination have done, would border hard on blasphemy.

To speak in the degrading manner which *some* have done, of the ancient church and Zion of God, would in me be abominable slander. And to denominate the whole Pedobaptist church from the days of the Apostles to the present time, by the name of "*Antichrist*," implies such a degree of *reviling*, as in my view is perfectly inconsistent with the christian character.

No two *characters* or *objects* in the universe are more perfectly opposed to each other, than the *character* of *Christ* and the *character* of *Antichrist*. *Light* and *darkness*, *heaven* and *hell*, the *character* of *Jehovah* and the *character* of *Belzebub*, are no more opposed to each other than the *characters* of *Christ* and *Antichrist*. Therefore, for *me* indiscriminately, to charge the *holy Martyrs*, the *pious Christians*, and *godly Ministers* of the Pedobaptist churches in all ages, as being the members and Ministers of "*Antichrist*," would imply a degree of *reviling* which, perhaps, has never been surpassed even by infidels.

An inspired Apostle has classed *revilers* with the most vicious characters, and has assured us, that they shall not inherit the kingdom of God. May I not then, Sir, justly fear to become of *this class* among the Baptists.

I have, Sir, indeed, been an advocate for open communion with your denomination. But I must now freely and solemnly profess to you, that I have no wish

in my heart for open communion with any *man* or *class* of *men* who will, in such a manner, *revile* the church and people of God. And I believe it to be a solemn duty, incumbent on all Pedobaptist Ministers and churches, to show their disapprobation of such conduct, by discontinuing all tokens of Christian fellowship with such as are *known to revile* in such a manner, until they shall exhibit evidence of repentance.

I wish to be understood that I do not recommend this discontinuance of fellowship respecting all who are Baptists. Many of the Baptists I have no doubt, do, in heart, abhor such reviling, and grieve to see that it is practised by any of their professed brethren. But with regard to those who must be supposed to *know* the meaning of the word "*Antichrist*," and who, for *party purposes*, and as a term of *reproach*, apply it indiscriminately to all Pedobaptists, I believe it to be our duty to withdraw from them the hand of fellowship, both as *Ministers* and as *Christians*. For this mode of proceeding I think we have unequivocal and unquestionable warrant, 1 Cor. v. 11. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man who is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a RAILER, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat.

You, Sir, or your brethren will, perhaps, plead, that what I have denominated *reviling*, is a *correct* and *systematic* proceeding, perfectly consistent with your close communion sentiment and practice. I am willing, Sir, to admit, that your calling us "*Antichrist*" is consistent with your principle and practice of close communion; and the most consistent ground which I have ever seen exhibited, on which to support the close communion practice. But this I cannot admit as an excuse for the practice of reviling. To this course of reviling the great body of the friends of God, I conceive you are reduced by your wish to support your close communion practice. But the conclusion which naturally results from this view of the matter is, that your close communion system is a system which cannot be carried into effect, in its full extent, without the

most flagrant violation of the principles of moral rectitude.

If I adopt principles which will justify *theft, drunkenness, or murder*, or which will naturally lead me to the practice of such wickedness, am I to be excused from blame on this ground, that my conduct is consistent with the principles I have adopted? No, Sir, If my principles are such as will *justify* wickedness, or *naturally lead* to the practice of wickedness, they are such as ought to be reprobated and renounced.

Charity compels me, however, to grant, that probably many of the Baptist brethren have been led to adopt the practice of calling us "Antichrist," by the example of some popular leaders, while they know not the meaning of the term; and have never considered that *Antichrist* is a character at *war* with *Christ*. For such persons I am willing to admit an apology. But what excuse can be made for those popular leaders, who profess to be *learned*, not only in our own language, but also in the language in which the New Testament was originally written?

You will, perhaps, farther plead, that the very persons who call us "*Antichrist*," do also call us *Christians*. Very true; and what is the inference, but this, that it is for *party purposes*, and for *reproach*, that they call us "*Antichrist*?"

But, dear Sir, does not your admired Mr. Merrill, in addition to what I have quoted, expressly assert, that "Anti-Pedobaptists have always denied that the Pedobaptist church is the true Gospel church, and have ever considered Pedobaptism as a badge of Antichrist, if not her essential characteristic?"

On the first view of these assertions, I had some doubts respecting their correctness. I was not perfectly satisfied that you had *always* carried the matter to such a length as to deny our being the "true Gospel church," and had *ever* considered us as wearing the "badge of Antichrist," or as being an Antichristian church. And even now, I am sensible that many things have been said and done by your denomination which are inconsistent with Mr. Merrill's assertions. Yet when I re-

flect on the *general tenor* of the conduct of your teachers towards us, the *manner* in which they have attempted to *degrade* and *supplant* our settled Ministers, to break up our churches and societies, the little regard they have shown to our *feelings* and to our *solemn covenants*, together with their close communion practice, I am ready to believe that Mr. Merrill will be able to support his assertion, that you “have *always* denied that the Pedobaptist church is the true Gospel church.”

But, Sir, I must profess to you, that I am astonished at the degree of *arrogancy* and *ensoriousness* implied in the ground you have taken, in calling us “Anti-christ,” and claiming to yourselves the honor of being *exclusively* the church of Christ. This censure falls, not only on *Congregationalists*, but on *Episcopalians*, *Presbyterians*, and a variety of other denominations.

Now, Sir, suppose that this land should at once be emptied of all the Ministers and professors of religion who are by you considered as belonging to “Anti-christ,” how small a portion of *piety*, *religion*, and *real worth* would be left in the land? Is it not to be feared, that scarcely enough would be found remaining to save the land from the fate of devoted Jerusalem, in a prospect of which the Redeemer wept?

Besides, Sir, how empty would be your *book-cases* of *valuable writings on divinity*, if all were consumed which have been written by those Ministers whom you denounce as the *adherents* of “*Antichrist*?” You have, indeed, a few writers who would be an honor to any denomination of Christians; and we esteem them highly for what they have written. But how very little, Sir, has been produced by your denomination in *this country*, excepting on your favorite subjects, *baptism* and *close communion*? Are not the writings of one individual of the Pedobaptists, the *first* PRESIDENT EDWARDS, of tenfold more worth than all the writings of your denomination, in this country, from its first settlement to the present day? Yet, this *godly man*, with myriads of others, must, by you, be *traduced* as the *adherents* of *Antichrist*, the grand enemy of Christ.

Consider, Sir, what a cloud of distinguished witnesses Christ has had in the Pedobaptist church. How many thousands, *who have laid down their lives for his sake*. How many he has employed as *champions* for the truths of his religion, and as *burning and shining lights* in the world. And, in a *comparative* view, consider how *sparingly* he has bestowed such *distinguished favors* and *honors* on your denomination.

Is it, Sir, to be believed, that Christ has, for many centuries, *uniformly*, and almost *universally*, made use of the *adherents* of "*Antichrist*" as his *chief instruments* for the *illustration* and *defence* of the *great doctrines of his gospel*? But such, Sir, is the case, if your pretensions are well founded. Can you deny that a hundred fold more has been done by the Pedobaptist church, for the *illustration* of *truth* and the *defence* of the *Gospel*, than has ever been done by your denomination? And do you wish it to be understood, that the *adherents* of *Antichrist* have done *more* for Christ than has been done by his *exclusive friends*? Is it, Sir, for the honor of CHRIST to have it believed, that he has been so in *love* with "*Antichrist*," as to bestow the greatest share of his *distinguishing favors* on her *adherents* and *supporters*, to the *neglect* of his "*TRUE GOSPEL CHURCH*?" GOD FORBID!

It would, I think, have required no extraordinary share of *prudence* and *modesty*, in your writers, to have waved these high pretensions, in hope of a period, in which, what you shall have done for Christ would bear a better comparison with what has been done by those who are denounced as the *adherents* of "*Antichrist*." And does it not behove you, Sir, solemnly to inquire, in the light of Scripture, whether *our adherence to infant baptism* agrees better with the *character and spirit of* "*Antichrist*," than *your ARROGANT and CENSORIOUS pretensions*?

Unless I shall be made to believe, that, in God's account *arrogancy* stands for *humility*, and *censoriousness* for *christian candor* and *brotherly love*, I shall ever fear to become an advocate for your *exclusive claims*.

Your's, &c.

LETTER VIII.

REV. SIR,

I HAVE still farther reasons to give why I cannot be a Baptist—Therefore,

6. I *fear* to take ground on which the course of my conduct must be involved in *self-contradiction*.

Should I become a Baptist, if I am a Christian, it is reasonable to expect, that, at some seasons, the feelings of piety, humility, brotherly love, and Christian tenderness, would predominate. At such seasons, I should be constrained to *feel* and *converse* respecting many of the Pedobaptists, as though they were my brethren in the Lord. I should have to call them *Christians*, and the *friends of God*. I should wish to associate with them as such; and should wish to exchange with pious Ministers of the Pedobaptist denomination, and to hear them preach the *unsearchable riches of Christ*. But when *party affection* and *party zeal* should become predominant, and I should have occasion to vindicate my conduct as a *close communionist*, then I should change the tone of my conversation, accuse them of being *wilfully blind* respecting the order of Christ's house, and the ordinances of his kingdom. By giving liberty to my tongue, my zeal would be increased and inflamed, till the whole Pedobaptist church would be considered as belonging to "*Antichrist*."—Thus those, who in *one hour* would be considered as the *children of God*, in *another* would be *treated* as the *children of the devil*: and all this without any change in any one but *myself*. This gloomy prospect, Sir, has resulted from reading and observation. I therefore fear to be a Baptist.

7. I fear to adopt a theory by which I should be led to employ my time and talents for the purpose of dividing, or breaking up, peaceable societies and churches; and to use my influence in prejudicing the minds of people against godly Ministers.

I very well know, that your denomination undertake to support, from the Scriptures, the propriety of their conduct in *causing divisions*. Nor am I wholly unac-

quainted with their mode of reasoning for this purpose, but I am *afraid* to adopt it.

Christ, in foretelling his disciples what would be the *consequence* of his coming, by reason of the wickedness of the human heart, made use of these words, “ Suppose ye, that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you nay, but rather divisions.” And how often do we hear persons of your denomination quoting this text in vindication of their conduct, as though Christ had *required* it of them to make *divisions* in *churches* and *societies*?—But why, Sir, do you not quote the parallel text in Matthew, to prove that it is lawful for you to propagate your sentiments by the *point of the sword*? “ Think not,” said Christ, “ that I am come to send peace on the earth, but a sword.” The meaning of this text is probably the same as the meaning of the other. And why may not the *latter* text be urged in support of the method which Mahomet took to propagate *his* sentiments with as much propriety as your brethren quote the *former* in support of *their* practice in *causing divisions*?

I will take the liberty, Sir, to suggest for your serious consideration, another text of somewhat similar import with those which have been mentioned. Matt. xviii. 7, “ Wo unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but wo to THAT MAN by whom the offence cometh!”

Though some of your denomination attempt to *justify* their conduct in *causing divisions*, by the passage quoted from Luke; yet as soon as we urge that it is *our* duty to *mark those who cause divisions and offences*, and to *avoid them*: immediately they deny that they are the ones who cause division; and affirm, that it is the Pedobaptists who cause the divisions, by having departed from gospel order. In one instance, therefore, you own that you do make the divisions, and attempt to *justify* your conduct; in the other, you deny your making divisions, and charge the crime upon the Pedobaptists. If this, Sir, be strait sailing, what can be crooked? Must we not, Sir, suppose, that a person finds it very difficult to justify his conduct, who will adopt such contradictory methods?

LETTER IX.

REV. SIR,

I MUST add,

8. I *fear* to take ground on which I must urge the *prevalence* of my *distinguishing sentiments* as proof of their *rectitude*.

The absurdity of this argument I endeavoured to show in my "Impartial Inquiries respecting the progress of the Baptist denomination." But I find, as absurd as it is, that it is still urged by your brethren; and even by a Doctor in Divinity. I must therefore address to you a few observations on this point.

If the *prevalence* of your peculiar sentiments may be admitted as *proof* of their *rectitude*, it must be for this reason, viz. that in this *sinful world* nothing but *truth* can be thus *prevalent*. If it be as common for *error* to prevail as it is for *truth*, then neither truth nor error can be known by their prevalence—But if it be *your* opinion that the *prevalence* of a sentiment is an evidence of its *truth*, to act consistently with this opinion, you must admit into your *system of truth* every sentiment that is *prevalent* in the world. And must not this, Sir, be a very complex and heterogeneous system?

If *you believe* that the *prevalence* of your *peculiar sentiments* is an evidence that they are according to truth, why do you not admit the same plea in favor of the peculiar sentiments of the Methodists, and incorporate *their sentiments* into *your system*? The Methodists urge the same plea in their favor, and with as much reason as it is urged by your denomination.

Besides, Sir, if it be your serious belief that the *prevalence* of your sentiments is an *evidence* of their *truth*, how comes it to pass that you dare to reject and ridicule the *sentiments* of the *Pedobaptists*? Their sentiments have been, and still are vastly more *prevalent* than yours.

Must it not, Sir, be true, that in urging this plea, the leaders of your denomination have been *remarkably deluded*, or *verily dishonest*? Has not this plea often

been urged by those who saw its fallacy, merely for the sake of making proselytes? And have you not, Sir, reason to fear that thousands have been persuaded to become Baptists by this fallacious and delusive dream? I dare not, Sir, venture my soul on such ground.

Perhaps, Sir, I might without great impropriety, suggest to you that I *fear* to take ground on which I should be led to imagine that *all the world* will soon be Baptists, because that *myself* and a few other *noted characters* have recently adopted the Baptist scheme. But this I shall not urge, because I have a much more serious ground of fear to mention. Hence,

9. I *seriously fear*, Sir, to be in such a situation, and in such a connection, that I must cry “persecution” under the pressure of a *fair* and *just* representation of my own conduct, or the conduct of my brethren.

In my “Impartial Inquiries” respecting the progress of your denomination, I very freely and candidly admitted that, in some instances, the imprudence of Pedobaptists had given too much ground for the Baptists’ cry of *persecution*. I am still willing to admit the same. But I think it my duty to declare it to you, as my serious belief, that your cry of *persecution* has often been raised under the *pressure* of most *serious* and *just representations* of *improper conduct*.

Permit me, Sir, on this particular to deal very plainly. Do not many preachers of your denomination very frequently act the part of *aggressors* and *invaders*; enter our societies in an insidious manner, and trample on the rights and the feelings of Pedobaptist Ministers and Churches? Do they not, as though they possessed the *power of absolution*, induce many to a violation of *sacred civil contracts* and *solemn religious covenants*? Have they not, in many instances, done all in their power to excite a prejudice in the minds of people against *godly Ministers* and *humble Christians*? And when these irregular, insidious, and abusive proceedings have been fairly, justly, and seriously represented by way of reproof or warning, have not many Baptists, on such occasions, immediately resorted to their cry of “persecution,” to divert the attention of

people from the impropriety of their own conduct, to excite a prejudice against their faithful reprovers, and to make proselytes to their own party ?

In my next I shall give you an allegorical illustration of some of my views. But if there be nothing of a public nature to which it will apply, the allegory will be inexplicable to all but the writer.

Your's, &c.

LETTER X.

REV. SIR,

ACCORDING to promise, I am now to give you an allegorical illustration.

There was a man in the land of Freedom, whose name was Isaac. He was a good and upright man, and one who feared God, and sought his glory. Having the requisite qualification, he undertook the business of a shepherd. *Disdaining all clandestine proceedings*, by *fair and honorable* means he obtained a flock of more than three hundred sheep. The welfare of his flock was near to his heart, and to the care of them he devoted his time—and from his flock he expected an annual support for himself and his family.

After a few years, Ishmael, a native of the same country, also undertook the business of a shepherd. But instead of going where a flock might be had by honorable means, he cast his eye on the flock of Isaac. And by *observation* or *information*, he found that some individuals of the flock seemed to be *uneasy* and inclined to *ramble*. They were often seen at a distance from the rest of the flock, and appeared to be looking for some opening in the fence, through which they might creep. With *these* Ishmael soon began to familiarize himself; and after a few days he made a breach in the fence, and enticed them to follow him out of the inclosure. He, however, allowed them frequently to return and associate with the flock, in hope that others would be induced to follow their example. By such a course of conduct, with other *arts* which he employed, he gained a considerable number of Isaac's sheep. And,

not at all ashamed of the course he had adopted, he publicly advertised the number he had gained, and seemed to glory in his acquisition.

Though Isaac was a prudent and candid man, he was not destitute of feeling, nor afraid to bear testimony against such *dishonest* and *insidious* conduct. He therefore, remonstrated against the conduct of Ishmael, and represented it as dishonorable, and beneath the dignity of a Christian.

As soon as the remonstrance came to the ears of Ishmael, he set up the *cry* of *persecution*. He affirmed, that he was treated just as Christ and his Apostles were treated : and seemed to glory in it, that he was *accounted worthy to suffer for righteousness sake*. From the circumstance of his being thus persecuted, he undertook to prove that he was a humble follower of Christ, and that his principles and conduct were according to the unerring Oracles of truth.

Almost every thing which Isaac did, or that he neglected to do, which had a tendency to secure the rest of his flock from being ensnared by Ishmael, was made a ground for the cry of persecution. One instance of this may be mentioned.

Isaac had in his inclosure a fold where he stably fed his flock. When he went to the fold, the sheep of their own accord came to be fed. After Ishmael had obtained a part of the flock, and found that the remainder were shy of him, he, with professions of respect for Isaac, and great love to his flock, made an offer of his service to go with Isaac to the fold, and to feed the sheep at his own expense. Isaac had discernment enough to see the object of this proposal, and prudence and firmness enough to reject it. But this rejection of the proposal of Ishmael was deemed sufficient ground for bitter and loud complaints.

Thus, Sir, I have given you the allegory : and permit me to ask, whether you ever *saw* or *heard* any thing like the conduct of Ishmael? Or do you need Joseph or Daniel for an interpreter?

I will not, Sir, make use of reproachful epithets, but I will seriously ask *you* what epithets you would use

to characterize such a man as Ishmael, or to denominate his conduct? As capable; Sir, as I am of feeling pain, and as timid as I am by nature; my feelings do not revolt so much at the thought of *burning at the stake*, as at the thought of *following the example* of Ishmael.

Your's, &c.

LETTER XI.

REV. SIR,

IN the preceding letters I have exhibited the principle reasons which have operated in my mind to prevent my embracing your theory, and adopting your practice.

While writing, it was my aim, on the one hand, to make my representations in so plain a manner as to be fairly understood, and, on the other, to avoid every degree of misrepresentation, either in respect to sentiment or practice. And, on a careful review of what I have written, I cannot find that I have, in any particular, deviated from my purpose.

But I wish it to be distinctly understood, that in what I have written, which implicates *blame* or *improper conduct*, it was not meant to be applied to all your denomination indiscriminately; but only to those who are chargeable with the things implied or represented. For many of the Baptist denomination I still feel a cordial respect, and view them as brethren and sisters in the Lord. And indeed, Sir, I am not without hope, that many of those whose conduct has been implicated as blameable, are good people, though led astray by *party zeal* and *prepossessions*. I am, Sir, far from any inclination to denounce you all as the *enemies* of Christ, by calling you "*Antichrist*." I hope I have so far *learned Christ*, as not to render *reviling for reviling*.

I may with propriety add, that it has been painful to me to have occasion to imply such a degree of blame in writing on the conduct of professed Christians. Happy should I have been to have had nothing to oppose, but your sentiment on infant baptism. But improper conduct of an habitual and public nature, is as

properly a subject of animadversion as error in sentiment. I have therefore taken the liberty to suggest, for your consideration some things, which, in my view, are highly improper, and which ought to be corrected. But if, in so doing, I have indulged and manifested any *bitterness of Spirit*, in *this* I am inexcusable, and for *this* am justly reprehensible. But, Sir, I think you will be sensible, after proper attention, that I have restricted my animadversions to such conduct as is generally known, and capable of the most substantial and abundant proof.

But should I be convinced by you, or any other person, that I am chargeable with having injuriously misrepresented the views, or the practice, of any writer, or preacher, or others of your denomination, you may be assured that I shall frankly retract it, if my life should be spared for a sufficient length of time; and that, I shall not *prove myself a false witness* by REPUBLISHING any *misrepresentations* after I am convinced that they are *false* and *injurious*.

In respect to the allegory of Isaac and Ishmael, it may be proper for me to observe, that it was not intended to characterize the two denominations as such, nor all the Ministers of either denomination. It was intended to be applied *only* where it may be found applicable. The name of Ishmael was not introduced for the purpose of reproach. I am not aware that any evidence exists by which it can be proved that Ishmael, the son of Abraham, was not a godly man. But as you reject the covenant made with Abraham, which was *established* with Isaac, while we adhere to that covenant as implying all the grounds of our hope, I will not deny that this circumstance had influence with me in adopting the names of Isaac and Ishmael. Nor will I pretend, that, while writing the allegory, I was so perfectly blind as not to discern some glimmerings of correspondence between the *conduct* I was describing, and the *character* of Ishmael as given by the spirit of prophecy.

But what, Sir, have I reason to expect from your people in return for these just and dispassionate re-

presentations ? If I am to form my expectations on the ground of past experience and careful observation, must I not expect to be *loaded* with *reproach* and *vilified* as a *persecutor* ? and that some, who profess to be *children that will not lie*, will make most abusive misrepresentations of what I have written ? Such treatment I do not expect from all of your denomination who may read these Letters. Some of them I have no doubt will acknowledge the representations to be lamentably just and important. But I fear that many others will adopt a very different course. And this, Sir, I fear far less on my *own* account than on *theirs*. I shall probably soon be out of the reach of *benefit* from *applause*, or of *injury* from *reviling*. But, Sir, it is a serious thing to despise reproof. For we have explicit warrant to say that “He that hateth reproof shall die.”

That the spirit of *reviling* has been too much indulged by both denominations, I have no inclination to deny. It is a sin, which, at the present day, greatly abounds in our land ; and, perhaps, more than any other vice, threatens the ruin of our nation. It appears to be a sin which very easily besets almost all classes of people. It is a sin which is generally concomitant with all disputes or controversies, whether civil, political, or religious. There are, however, but few vices more frequently and more decidedly spoken against in the Scriptures.

But serious, dispassionate, and just representations of blameable conduct, of a public nature, spoken or written by way of *reproof* to the *guilty*, and *warning* to *others*, do not properly fall under the denomination of *reviling* or *slander* ; though, by those who cannot bear to be reproved, they are often thus denominated.

Nothing, perhaps, is more direct evidence of a *selfish heart*, or a *party spirit*, or unwillingness to come to the light, than for a person, when candidly and seriously reproved, to denominate such reproof, *railing* or *slander*. Every humble Christian is willing to come to the light, that his deeds may be reproved. He is willing to be told his faults, and to have the faults, of

his brethren laid fairly before them. He will not, when reproved, immediately fly into a passion, nor resort to the practice of reviling, nor to the cry of persecution. But he will enter into a serious inquiry respecting the justness of the reproof. So far as he finds himself guilty, he will humble himself, confess his faults, and amend his ways ; and he will use his influence to have his brethren receive and treat the reproof in a Christian manner. For a person, when justly and solemnly reproved, to attempt to excite a *hue-and-cry*, against the reprover, may be considered as both *an evidence of guilt* and a *proof of impenitency*.

Permit me, Sir, to entreat you to receive what I have written, in such a manner as to evince that I have rebuked *a wise man*, and not to evince that I have reproved a scorner. And you have my full consent to use the same freedom which I have indulged, to represent the faults of the denomination to which I belong ; that is, any faults which are equally common, and of a public nature. It is very probable that I may be, in a degree, blinded as to my own faults, and the faults of those with whom I am connected. But I hope, Sir, that I can, with some sincerity say, “ Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness ; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head : for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.”

But when I consider that some, for whom I have had an affectionate regard, have come forward, and, in the heat of their zeal, have *denounced* the whole Pedobaptist church, in all ages, as belonging to “ *Antichrist*,” I cannot be amazed at the *blinding influence of party prejudice* ; nor can I but entertain a *jealousy* of my own *heart*, and a fear that something of this blinding nature has had undue influence in dictating what I have written. Should this be found to be true, I shall have deep cause of humiliation before God and man. It behoves me to look to Him who knoweth all things, and to say, “ Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts :” and if there be any of this blinding leaven within me, “ purge me and

make me clean."—Save me from whatever may wound thy cause, injure thy friends, or dishonor thy name ; and cause me to do unto others only as I would that they should do unto me.

Now, dear Sir, with, as I hope, real and fervent desires for your best good ; for the peace and prosperity of Zion ; for more real and apparent union among all the members of Christ's body ; and with assured expectation of meeting you and all the Baptist denomination at the tribunal of God, I bid you a solemn and affectionate FAREWELL. NOAH WORCESTER.

(From the Massachusetts Missionary Magazine.)

A SERIOUS QUESTION PROPOSED IN A SERIOUS MANNER.

To the Editors—Gentlemen,

DIVINE Providence has cast my lot in a place where I am surrounded with people who call themselves Baptists. By the constant and pressing solicitation of these people, several of whom are my particular acquaintances and friends, I was prevailed on to attend their meetings. At first I was not remarkably pleased, neither was I displeased. The preacher appeared to be a good sort of man, and his preaching, though not searching and instructive, had the effect to catch the attention, to please the fancy, and to excite the passions. I did not forsake my own meeting ; yet I continued to go, from time to time, on conference and lecture occasions, and sometimes on the Sabbath, with my Baptist friends. They were exceedingly gratified, expressed great friendship and love, and almost overwhelmed me with their attentions. My mind was considerably carried away. I began to think there were no people so good as the Baptists ; at least that there were none who had so much zeal and so much love. My affection for the church, of which I was a member, for my minister, whom I had esteemed very highly in love, and even for my God and Saviour, grew inconstant and cold ; and, by degrees, gave place to an unaccountable something, which I cannot better describe, than by calling it a *bewitching* fondness for

the Baptists. I began even to prefer light, and superficial, and boisterous addresses, to the solid, instructive, pungent, and searching preaching which I had been accustomed to hear. And though I am now convinced, that the divine life in my soul was then in a state of awful decline, and that instead of genuine and solid religion, I was strangely taken up with a fantastic zeal, and the mere movements of natural sympathy; yet at the time, I really imagined that I was in a very good way, and had great religious enjoyment. In a word, I seem to have been in a state of enchantment. I could not endure a word said against the Baptist way, and could hardly rest unless I was with them.

But at length the enchantment was dissolved. It pleased the Lord, by means which I need not relate, to awaken me to a sense of my situation. I was brought, I think, to see that I had been awfully deluded and led astray. Every thing now appeared in a different light. Though I still hoped that there was some true religion among the Baptists, I was, however, convinced, that a great share of their love and zeal was merely the effusions and fervour of party; and their assiduous attentions to me I could view in no other light, than, as attempts to draw me into a violation, and even a renouncement of my solemn vows. What I had for a while so much admired among them, instead of leading to those views of the holy character of God, and of the deep depravity of the heart, which are necessary to preserve that humility and godly fear, without which religion becomes a vain and empty shew, I found had only a tendency to keep the mind in a light and flighty state. I, therefore, thought it my duty immediately to alter my course.

I reasoned with myself thus: Did there exist a society of people, who openly reprobated the marriage covenant as generally holden, and inculcated the doctrine that all matrimonial relations and vows, out of their own particular connection, were wrong, and instead of being sacredly observed, ought to be utterly renounced; and who, accordingly, used their endeavours to seduce husband from wife, and wife from husband, to break up families, and to cast helpless chil-

dren, without father and without mother, upon the world : should I do right to seek the company of those people ? Should I act the part of “ *a chaste keeper at home*,” or of a discreet and faithful wife, were I statedly to go with them to their places of resort, to receive their assiduous attentions, and listen to their seductive solicitations ? Should I not rather, in such a case, act a part exceedingly imprudent, give reason for my fidelity to be suspected, and most criminally expose myself to temptation and seduction ? But is not my covenant with God and his people of a nature, as sacred and as little to be trifled with, as the marriage covenant ? Can I consistently go with a people who openly deny this covenant, who propagate the doctrine that the religious vows which are made, and the religious relations which are formed out of their own particular connection, are not to be sacredly observed, but ought to be utterly renounced ; and who use their endeavours to draw away our professors from their solemn engagements, to break up our churches, and to cast out our children, without any covenant provision for them, into the wide and ensnaring world ? On the whole, the case appeared to me exceedingly plain. I was shocked at my conduct, and could not be sufficiently thankful that I was brought to see it, in what I supposed to be its true light. And I have since endeavoured to conform my deportment to the views, which I have had of my covenant engagements. But for this I have been severely censured. My Baptist friends have utterly forsaken me ; and even some of my own brothers and sisters think me too rigid.

Now, Messrs. Editors, if I am wrong in this point, I wish to be set right. And I am not alone ; there are several of my Christian acquaintances, who wish to be satisfied on this subject. Permit me, therefore, to request an answer, as soon as convenient, to the following question :

Is it, in ordinary cases, compatible with Christian fidelity, for members of our churches to attend the meetings of those, who utterly deny our church covenant, refuse us Christian fellowship, and labour to overthrow our church state ?

LYDIA.









